Grant of autonomy to J and K

*59. DR. ABRAR AHMED :

SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the reported press statement by the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir to the effect that the grant of autonomy to the State was a pre-requisite for the return of peace to the valley;

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether it is a fact that during his meeting with the Prime Minister, the Chief Minister reiterated his position and received some assurances from him; and

(d) if so, the details of the assurance given by the Prime Minister with regard to the demand for autonomy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CHENNAMANANI VIDYA SAGAR RAO): (a) and (b) Yes Sir, the Government is aware of the media reports about the statement purportedly made by the Chief Minister of J & K. Voices have been raised both in favour and against the grant of autonomy to J & K, in the past. The Government is of the firm conviction that national integration and devolution of powers to the States must go together and is committed to continuing its endeavour to evolve a broad consensus on the implementation of steps for wide ranging devolution of powers to the States leading to efficiency in administration, acceleration in development and fullest realization of the creative potential of all sections of our people.

(c) and (d) The matter relating to devolution of power for Jammu & Kashmir was discussed by the CM, J & K, with the Prime Minister on 24-06-2002, and it was decided that a representative of the Central Government would hold discussions with the Government of J & K on this issue.

Complaint against EU in WTO

*60. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government is planning to lodge a complaint with the World Trade Organisation's dispute settlement panel against the European Union for refusing extend to it the preferential treatment granted to textile export from Pakistan under the generalised system of preferences scheme;

(b) if so, whether India has claimed that the differential treatment has led a decrease in its exports of certain textile products to the region during the past few months;

(c) if so, what is the reaction of the WTO dispute body; and

(d) whether any settlement has been reached in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) to (d) The Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) of the European Union (EU) for the period 1st January 2002 to 31st December 2004 *inter alia* provides for suspension by the EU of customs duties for all products which have not graduated, under special tariff arrangements to combat drug production and trafficking. Pakistan is one of the beneficiary countries under this special arrangement. Being against the multilateral frame work of the WTO, and since the concession given to Pakistan may adversely affect India's exports to EU, India had taken up this issue with EU through bilateral consultations held in February 2002. During the consultations it was highlighted that India would stand to lose substantial trade, particularly in the textiles and clothing sector, on account of duty concessions given selectively to Pakistan. The EU was requested to rectify the adverse trade impact due to such concessions. The bilateral consultations did not, however, yield the desired results from India's point of view.

As the first step to resolve the above dispute with EU, under the Dispute Settlement Mechanism of WTO, it was decided to seek consultations with EU. The consultations were held with EU on 25th March 2002 during which certain details regarding adverse impact on our trade were conveyed to the EU. These consultations have, however, not led to positive results. Another round of consultations was held with EU on 9th July, 2002. While India is still open to remedial action from the EU side, further course of action would be taken in accordance with the WTO rules.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Non-Freezing Drink for Soldiers Developed by Defence Scientists

†100. DR. ABRAR AHMED: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that defence scientists have developed a drink for the soldiers keeping round the clock vigil on snow covered mountains and which does not freeze even at a temperature of minus twenty degree;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.